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P E N I S T O N E.

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A N N U A L R E P O R T.
For the Year 19~~38~~39

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THOS.H.EASTON, M.D., B.Ch.,
Medical Officer of Health.

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PENISTONE RURAL DISTRICT.

To:-
The Chairman and Members,
Penistone Rural District Council.

Gentlemen,

I beg to submit herewith a condensed Report upon the conditions in the Penistone Rural District during the year 1939. In accordance with instructions from the Ministry of Health, the Report is, as it were, an interim one, and deals principally "with matters arising from, or "connected with, the War". I may say that I have carefully filed all the usual statistical records of the year. I much regret the inordinate delay in submitting my notes to you. Owing to the exigencies of war, however, essential figures have been unusually late in reaching me.

The number of BIRTHS registered during the year was 96, males 51; females 45. This gives a birthrate of 14.5 per thousand of the population, slightly lower than that for all England- 15.0.

The number of DEATHS-corrected for inward and outward transfers-which occurred during the year, was 64; males 31, females 33. This gives a Deathrate of 9.8. per thousand of the population as compared with a death rate for all England of 12.1. Three children died under one year of age, a mortality rate of 41.7. Last year the rate was 104.4. The figure for 1939 for all England was 50.0. No fewer than 27 deaths were of persons of 70 years or upwards.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES:-

The year was a good one, and only 12 cases of Notifiable Infectious Disease was reported to me. But four of these was of Diphtheria. As you are aware, the Ministry of Health is continuously urging upon all parents, the advisability, nay the imperativeness, of having their children of pre-school and of school-age inoculated against this fell disease. During the last three years, I have steadfastly practiced this immunisation against Diphtheria, and have, as a matter of fact, inoculated several hundred children. I have yet to learn of any child, so protected, subsequently suffering from the disease. But it is not always easy to persuade parents to submit their children to the process. One is bound to assume that they have the welfare of their offspring at heart. Yet many are reluctant to avail themselves of the protection offered to them, free of all cost. Presumably one of these days, ignorance will give place to enlightenment. In my experience, the practice of protective inoculation is a harmless one, and immunity from the disease for years-during the most susceptible period of life- may be confidently anticipated in at least ninety per cent of cases. Meanwhile I shall continue to urge upon all concerned, the vital necessity for the utilisation of the measure. In these times, too, it may soon become even more necessary than hitherto, since some of the Evacuees coming, or about to come into the area from crowded cities may easily prove to be carriers of the disease.

For nuisance inspections, scavenging etc.,etc., I beg to refer you to the annexed table C.

AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS.

The feature of the year was undoubtedly the establishment in the various parishes of the District of First Aid Points. Manned by trained Personnel, reasonably equipped, it is intended that such points should be able to render true first aid to casualties in their neighbourhodd, resulting from enemy action, in particular from aerial bombardment, until such moment that ambulances from the centre arrive to take over and evacuate such casualties. At one time, it was suggested that the work of the Points should be restricted to Walking cases. I am happy to think that such a suggestion has been abandoned. In my opinion to so limit the usefulness of the Points would be to render them a mere futility. If the Points are to have any value at all, the personnel must be prepared, and be allowed to deal forthwith with any emergency which comes within the ambit of the particular Point concerned, otherwise it

will be but a repetition of Nero fiddling while Rome burns, and lives may be lost while the shackled personnel stand impotently by, awaiting the arrival of parties from the Centre. In the area, it will be remembered, the distances are enormous, and it is impossible for ambulances to cover miles in the twinkling of an eye. I know of course that it is most unlikely that all the parishes will be visited by hostile air craft simultaneously. Nevertheless it is well to be ready for any eventuality.

The following is a list of the several First Aid Points:-

Methodist Chapel, Cote Lane, Thurgoland,
Methodist Chapel, Cranemoor.
Old Chapel, Greenmoor.
Council School, Hood Green.
Hall Royd Buildings, Silkstone Common.
Old School, Main Road, Silkstone.
Men's Institute, Darton Road, Cawthorne.
The Waggn & Horses Inn, Oxspring.
Methodist Chapel, Ingbirchworth.
Jubilee Hut, Carlecotes (projected).
The Institute, Dunford Bridge.
The Band Room, Crowedge.
Church of England School, Langsett.

SHELTERS.

I am bound to confess that I am not very enthusiastic about the public shelters which it is proposed to establish in the District. They will afford no protection whatever against A DIRECT HIT, unless indeed they are more than twenty-five feet below ground level, while the crowding together of persons in a limited space underground for hours together, cannot fail in my view to be provocative of disease and ill-health. I am convinced that instead of crowding into shelters (I am of course referring to the Penistone Rural District) people- apart from direct hits - when they would be no worse off, would be far safer and much more comfortable on the gound floor of their own homes, with their body arranged along lateral walls, and their windows covered, at a distances of one foot, by heavy loosely hanging curtains. It will be remembered that the effects of "Blast" are outward rather than inward. Hence is it that debris is found on streets rather than in rooms. For people caught in the open, however, public shelters are necessary.

GAS MASKS.

So far, this country has had to deal only with High Explosive and Incendiary Bombs. It seems to me that as a result a certain carelessness as regards the necessity for gas masks, has already shown itself. It is time that Germany signed the Geneva Gas Protocol of 1925 which prohibited the use of poison gas in future warfare. Whether, in the desperate straits to which the Hun will inevitably come, Germany will honour her signature is another matter. It appears to me to be more likely that emulating Samson of old, she bereft of hope and in despair, will try by any means in her power, to bring down with her in her fall, the whole fabric of civilisation. My advice therefore, is that each and every, all and sundry, see to it that their masks are efficient now. Many months have elapsed since they were first issued. Have they been periodically, or even once tested?

FOOD ETC.,

Since the health of the community is the province of the Medical Officer of Health, a few words here on the subject of food and food rationing may be permitted me. It is a matter which concerns every one; it is one in which all are vitally interested. At the outset I would insist that despite the restrictions in force, there is no reason whatever why anyone should go undernourished. The mere truth of the matter is, that in this country, for generations, we have been so pampered as regards foodstuffs that we have come to regard essentials as insipid, and to consider palate-pleasers, and luxuries as necessary, without which we cannot survive. White bread is a case in point, nearly everyone insists on having it, yet as a nutritive agent it cannot be compared with whole-meal bread. Negatively, oatmeal may be cited as

another example; it is an excellent food rich in iron. How On many tables is it served as porridge daily? In the case of sugar, everyone demands it, but there is no physiological reason why any person whatsoever so long as he or she has access to potatoes, rice, bread, and cereals generally, should take any sugar at all. In practically every instance it is used solely as a flavouring agent, and not because of its carbohydrate content. It is pleasant to the taste; its appeal is to the gustatory nerves. In the case of young children however, the exhibition of sugar is desirable, since in such, it is always advisable to present food-stuffs in an agreeable form. Again there is an outcry against Margarine, yet where it has been vitaminised, it is as good as butter, Unvitaminised it is as good a fat, but lacks the vitamines which butter contains. Beef, too, is not really necessary, since flesh-forming and tissue repairing ingredients are found in milk, cheese, eggs, beans and peas and in wholemeal bread. It was the Soya Bean which enabled the Germans to make such astonishing forced marches through Holland, Belgium and France.

May I here advocate most strongly the increased use of milk, for all, but especially for children. It is Nature's first food for all mammals, and it contains everything that is requisite and necessary for the maintenance of health. But in my opinion it should be drunk raw. In crowded centres of populations, boiling or pasteurisation may be necessary. In rural districts, however, such as ours, it is not so, particularly as in these days, supplies are under such constant supervision. Indeed in many cases of trouble, the farmer is blamed, when it is the house-holder who is at fault, I wonder how many house-holders cover their milk containers with gauze. My experience is that the milk is generally poured into basins or jugs, and thereafter left exposed to collect the germs which will fall into it from the air of the house, and the name of the germs is legion.

One word about the so-called "Protective Foods" these are the foods which contain vitamines, and the intake of vitamines is absolutely essential if health is to be perserved. Vitamines are contained in practically all the foods I have mentioned. But to the list must be added fruit- apples or oranges- and green-stuff. The value of carrots too, preferably eaten raw, cannot be over-estimated.

I find the morale of the Area to be high, and the spirit of the people to be one of determination, good hope, and good cheer. I cannot trace the incidence of any particular disease to the Black-out.

This is a rather unusual Report. But the times are out of joint.

I am,
Gentlemen,
Your obedient Servant,
THOS.H.EASTON. M.D.

Huthwaite House,
Thurgoland,
December, 1940.

P.S. The whole series of Vitamines, in pure form, are now available to the Public in the many preparations, which, at present, are on the market.

T.H.E.